

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) reflected on the 8th anniversary of the Iraq War:

"March 19 marks a very sad date in American history. Eight years ago, the Bush administration began an invasion of Iraq after lying about the existence of weapons of mass destruction, misleading the international community and the American people in order to justify the war on false pretenses. Without pursuing all non-military options, without a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, and without an iota of a plan for the day-after, the Bush administration committed the United States to an undertaking which has persisted now for eight years, costing tens of thousands of Iraqi and American lives and hundreds of billions of dollars.

"Many of us were skeptical about the rationale for military action and tried to convince the U.S. government not to use force in this conflict without establishing certain conditions. In the fall of 2002, I offered an alternative war resolution which required President Bush to provide Congress with a comprehensive plan for the long-term cultural, economic, and political stabilization in a free Iraq as well as a mandate from the UN before committing U.S. Armed Forces to war. Unfortunately, there was no majority in Congress to pass that bill. Instead the Bush administration rushed our nation into war not considering that military action is rarely, if ever, in a nation's best interest.

"As does every American citizen I, too, stand by our troops - especially when they are in harm's way. But since March 2003, over 4,700 U.S. and coalition soldiers, marines, airmen, sailors, and civilian employees have died in Iraq, and more than 32,000 have been wounded. Additionally, 100,000 Iraqi civilians may have died because of armed violence since the start of the Iraq war. Congress has committed more than \$750 billion to the war thus far; money that could have been used for a better purpose towards thwarting terrorism and promoting peace and democracy than by invading a country that had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

"Official combat operations may have ended, but the violence continues, our troops remain in harm's way, and we are still committing billions of dollars that could instead be spent on desperately-needed efforts here at home. I fully support President Obama's goal to bring all of the troops back by the end of 2011. Our nation's servicemen and women have made enormous sacrifices, carrying out their missions with honor and dedication. It is time for them to come home."

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.

###